

LT. GOVERNOR GARAMENDI URGES SAN DIEGO TO GO GREEN IN WAKE OF DEVASTATING FIRES

SAN DIEGO -- Lt. Governor John Garamendi today called for a fresh, green start for neighborhoods affected by the recent San Diego wildfires, encouraging homeowners, insurers, government agencies and utility companies to work together to rebuild safer, smarter, and more environmentally friendly than ever. In a speech before the US Green Building Council, SoCal Rebuilding Summit today, Garamendi said San Diegans have a unique opportunity to “go green from the ground up.”

“The recent Southern California wildfires were devastating, consuming lives, communities, homes and irreplaceable memories. And while affected homeowners are busy rebuilding their homes and their lives, they have a chance to make a real difference for the planet by rebuilding in a way that both reduces the fire threat and reduces their home’s impact on climate change.

Garamendi said affected communities should pool their ideas, talents and resources and begin building fire safe, sustainable structures. Working together, communities can receive the maximum leverage from subsidies available for alternative energy and energy efficiency, and minimize the environmental impact of rebuilt structures. In his speech, Garamendi outlined the following opportunities for San Diegans to rebuild green:

- Local governments should make information available and offer incentives for fire safe construction, including concrete siding for exterior walls, double pane windows, fire resistant roofing, safe siting and defensible space.
- Homeowners can conserve water by combining modern appliances and plumbing fixtures with mandatory zero or low water use landscaping and native flora. Efficient low use drip systems and efficient and safe methods of recycling water are also important for homeowners wanting to do their part in going green.
- Homeowners should take the opportunity to make new homes as energy efficient as current technology allows. Efficiency requirements included in new Title 24 building codes are an excellent start, but to achieve the most energy savings and the least environmental impact, homeowners can look to the highest Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

- Starting from the ground up, homeowners have the golden opportunity to deploy alternative sources of energy. Rooftop solar photovoltaic systems, passive solar systems, solar water heating and wind systems are alternative sources that are eco-friendly and have long-term cost saving benefits because the fuel is free.

- With new construction there may also be opportunities for small generation energy sources that could serve a collection of homes, rather than including separate systems at every site. Utility companies who administer these programs and who are replacing some of their existing damaged distribution infrastructure have the chance to work with local communities to creatively increase alternative energy. Earning incentives to encourage energy efficiency in residential and commercial structures, these companies are in a great position to lead a community-wide effort to assure the best techniques and systems are adopted. With the cooperation of contractors, economies of scale can bring down costs of rebuilding and retrofitting homes. Communities in the United Kingdom have adopted this model and serve as working examples of the endless possibilities available when communities share their resources and make a commitment to alternative energy sources.

“As the fifth largest economy in the world and historically an environmental leader to the world, California has a golden opportunity to prove itself once again -- from devastation to rebuilding cleaner and greener than ever. Global climate change reminds us we are all interconnected, that our energy use and consumption patterns impact the entire planet,” Garamendi said.

Garamendi noted that California’s clean, green new start is only possible when we all work together: representatives from the Governor’s Office, local and regional elected officials, state and local water and land management experts, the utilities, the insurance companies, contractors and their trade associations.

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